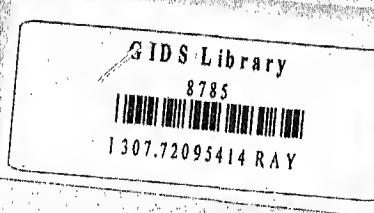


West Bengal: Evolution and Character of Post - 1977
Rural Development Programmes

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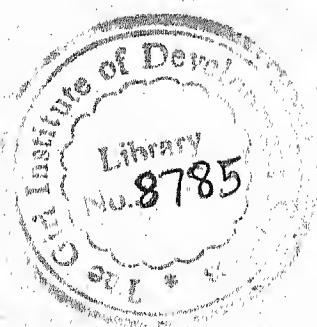
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West Bengal : Evolution and Character of
Post - 1977 Rural Development
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The strategy of Rural Development introduced in West Bengal in 1977 can be traced back to the progress intended by the Programmes of First and Second United Front (UF) Governments of 1967 and 1969, although there are some marked differences between the Pre and Post - 1977 Programmes in terms of objectives and implication of Policies.¹ In this respect the analysis of Left Front (LF) Programmes attempted here includes the strategy and Programmes of U.F. governments earlier and its subsequent evolution in the later period. This piece is divided into two parts : first part consist of analysis of previous attempts by both the U.F. government of 1967 and 1969, attempt of the Congress Party and the government to stop the previous attempt. This part is sub-divided into three sections : attempts of first U.F., initiative of second U.F. and reaction of the Congress Party and government. The Second part deals with the strategy formulated and executed by L.F. government in the post 1977 period in the various fields of rural development. This part is also sub-divided into four sections : Land Reforms, Operation Barga, West Bengal CADC and the general overview of these attempts.

¹ The formation of the two United Fronts were quite different from the present Left Front as parties like Bangla Congress was the major unit in 1967 and 1969. The inclusion of CPI within L.F. in 1981 have strengthen the unity of left and democratic parties.

First U.F.

The U.F. Governments of 1967 and 1969 were short lived ones. Due to this reason any long term programme or strategy was not possible to be implemented and every thing was done in a very short term manner. But in both the cases, land reforms were identified as the major plank of rural development in west Bengal. As both the Communist Parties CPI and CPI(M) were the constituent units of U.F., they identified the rural poverty, inequality and rural underdevelopment within the socio-economic and political structures and relations. Land ceiling, land relation and tenancy were the first targets of these two united fronts. Harekrishna Koirala, the then Land and Land Revenue Minister, indicated that solution of the basic problem of a country is not possible entirely by solving the problems related to base of the super-structure. The superstructure of the society should be changed and a new social order will be established. This new social order will free of Feudal land-ownership system and exploitation of foreign monopoly capital (Kopar: 1976).

Identification of Benami land, Land possessed in excess of the ceiling in fictitious names, security of tenants and economic development of landless agricultural workers were the major programmes undertaken. New legislation was not introduced considering legal complications. Any draft bill which is related to tenancy, Land holdings are taking time in obtaining assent of the president of India and some limitations have been imposed by constitution over state power. The partners of U.F. started mass

movement to create public opinion against the existing laws on land and land Revenue. To speed up the activities related to identification of land in excess of ceiling laws, distribution of government vested land, established administrative machinery was used with active cooperation of mass based organizations. In this way a clear attempt was made to link up the political initiative with the bureaucratic structure. The ruling parties of U.F. were directly involved in all these initiatives. In contrast, the Central leadership of the Congress Party was never interested in the participation of political parties as agents in bringing any structural change.²

The First U.F. government made it clear that all the government machinery worked with a pro-jotedar bias and landed interests utilized the loopholes in the laws and the administration for keeping their land out of ceiling laws. Then they recognized that participation of organised peasantry in identifying the excess land, registration of the Bargadars and strengthening the development activities as a necessary condition. The peasant organization, with active cooperation of ruling U.F. parties, inspired the sharecroppers and agricultural labourers to join the activities. The evidence of sharecroppers agricultural labourers are very important because they know

²Nehru believed that the political parties including the Congress party had little role to play in providing direction to this process. He asserted that I am not for a movement thinking about a party like Congress or any other party sending people to push them on or to organize them (R.K. Karanjia : 1960 : 72).

clearly who holds the land and persons cultivating them. So, increasing the consciousness among these sections was intended through participation of political forces to mobilize and organize the rural poor. The cooperation of the government officials was also enlisted. This particular method of working is the result of ideological orientations of the left political parties and their stated goal of social and democratic revolution.

Second U.F.

The Second United Front Ministry came into power in 1969 and generally there was no marked differences in methods, motivation and organisational forms used. They utilised the established machinery and a organized mass movement to implement the various programmes. The recovery of Benami land again started with the initiative of various peasant organizations. But this second initiative was different from the first one as in the second case land other than ceiling laws was considered for identification and then distribution among the land poor. Then the slogan was raised "get the list of such (benami) land from the government and occupy it yourselves". The poor peasant was widely organized to get back their lost land and Benami land of the Jotedars. This strategy opened up a new process of working and it also helped to grow up consciousness among the poor of their exploitation and process of fighting. As a result of the initiative taken by second U.F. government, over three lakh acres of Benami land was recovered and distributed among the landless rural poor. The distribution was done through a policy

that available land should be distributed among the landless agricultural labourers as many as possible. The relevant ideology behind this policy was that even a small holding of land will provide them some kind of economic security and the beneficiaries will come under the government delivery system. As the holder of some land beneficiaries will be benefited through the government sponsored programmes on land and agriculture as a whole. To strengthen this specific method intensive development programmes and some area based programmes were also introduced. For the proper utilization of these programmes, the established government administration at the block and district level were used with active participation of political organizations and grassroot based organizations of the poor. The mass movement, in the form of peasant movement, were also inspired to organize the peasantry as a class for the implementation of agrarian reforms. In reaction to this initiative, a great enthusiasm was raised among the rural poor during this period (R. Ghosh and K. Nagraj : 1978). In this period the slogan "to protect at any cost the crop produced by Us" raised by sharecropper. Then the state government adopt the principle that the peasant who cultivated the land, as share croppers, as owner of government vested land or Benami land, will harvest the crop and government will help them and take requisit procedure against the Jotedars who dare to attack them (Konar : 1977). But all these measures failed to fulfil the promises as early removal of both the U.F. governments from the State power.

Naxalbari Movement

The period of 1969-71 is very well known for the Naxalbari movement started under the leadership of CPI(ML). The workers of the Naxalbari movement and leadership of CPI(ML) identified the inevitability of the armed struggle to achieve socialist pattern of social structure. The revolutionary activities of the party started as peasant struggle throughout state under active leadership of Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santal. The movement started, in the state, in the naxalbari area of Darjeeling district and later known as Naxalbari movement. The armed peasant forces starts capturing the land of the big land-holders, looting the hoarding of foodgrains from the houses of rich peasants/landlords. The workers armed themselves with traditional weapons like bows, arrows, spear and with modern amenities. At the organisational level, they gave special emphasise to an underground armed militant force to work with an formal party organization at the state level (Hiro; 1976:148). In this understanding, the party workers starts guerilla war against the landlords, vested interests and others including government machinery. Peasant Committees were formed, at the local level, to lead the movement and mobilize the peasantry in favour of the struggle. These Committees were also know as village soviets and empowered to organize the open trials of the big landlords and in most of the cases the Jotedars were sentenced to death. The physical annihilation of the exploiting community started by the guerilla squad of the party to strengthen the class struggle in country side.

The strategy used by CPI(ML), during the Naxalbari movement can be divided into the two stages. In the first stage the armed peasant movement started to overthrow the semi-feudal power structure as well as the land system in rural areas. The second stage was concentrated in encircling the urban centre through liberate rural areas which was the central idea of Mao-tse-tung for Chinese revolution. The poor peasants, agricultural labourers and other poor people of both rural and urban area mobilized to encircled the urban centres to capture the total power structure of the country that will be resulted into the socialist society. To fulfill the first stage the unorganised peasantry encouraged to were/mobilized in a exploited category in a armed and militant manner. All these activities strengthen the class antagonism within the rural West Bengal and later in urban centres.

This movement break out in a very organised manner, with a clear ideology of Mao-tse-tung, after the fourth general election. The formation of non-congress government at state in 1967 and 1969 create a favourable atmosphere for starting an armed movement as U.F. ministry ordered not to use the police force against any democratic movement (Johari:1976:5). Even the police force was not employed against the Naxalites and they had given chances to surrender and came into compromise with the government. Some radical reforms in the form of land reforms was introduced mainly with the revolutionary line of the CPI(ML).

During 1970 the strategy of concentrating in the rural areas for more and more liberated zones was changed. The policy of encircling the urban areas by liberated rural area was also

withdrawn and the struggle that started in Debra and Gopiballavpur, Centred around the Calcutta metropolitan and industrial areas. The activities in towns started in different forms, i.e., hoisting red flag on educational institutions and factories, demonstration against anti China films, attacking the police and para military forces, etc. It was stated by the party officials that spontaneity of the city activities were taken by students from urban areas sent for mobilizing the rural poor were forced to come back in the face of official resistance (S.Ghosh : 1974 : 112).

The impact of the armed struggle by the Naxalites is very important as it opened up a new way of struggle for the economic development of the country. The movement gave a clear picture of the reaction of rural masses, those remained untouched by so called development programmes initiated by government in post-independence period. The movement has also a great impact on the policies and programmes of CPI and CPI(M) as well as the Congress party's orientation towards rural underdevelopment and poverty (S.A. Dange: 1970). The use of violence in the movement and organize the peasantry were the two remarkable feature of this movement. In the later period, specially during the first left front, agrarian reforms in the form of land reforms were undertaken and masses were mobilized in favour of those activities.

Reaction of the Congress party and Government

In 1972 Congress party returned to the power through "rigged election" (R.Ghosh and K.Nagraj: 1978:57 Namboodripad:1981:128)

and CPM boycotted the assembly in protest of the unfair measures taken by congress party to win the election. The activities started by second U.F. government were stopped and the traditional method of implementations through government officials started. The reform laws undertaken by U.F. remained on paper and the enthusiasm developed during peasant movements suppressed during the congress rule. The motivation and political ideology of the Congress party clearly reflected when they withdrawn the principle of popular participation of political organizations to ensure people's participation. In the field of agriculture certain amendment were introduced in the name of agrarian reform that practically resisted the radical motives of the existing procedure. On the other hand, in place of individual ceiling family ceiling was imposed with advance information. It helps the big land owners to keep the excess land in the name of family members by showing a divided family. The excess land and Benami land occupied during the U.F. rule were also taken back by all means. The plots of these lands were either distributed among the Joteders, who hold it previously, or to the members of the Congress party, those who were not entitled to get it. In disputes of tenant registration or cultivation of government vested land government administration was used against rural poor. In this manner the congress government of 1972 undid the gains achieved by the two U.F. governments in West Bengal.

Post 1977 Rural development programmes

In this background the Post-1977 programme of Rural

Development in West Bengal become important for its strategy, models and organisational forms of rural development activities. The 36 point Common Minimum programme undertaken by LF Government opened up a new stream of rural development activities in India. The agrarian reforms has given top priority to "uplift and improve the economic conditions of rural poor" consisting of people like small farmers, marginal farmers, sharecroppers and landless agricultural labourers. The land system that is dominated by rich peasants become the target of agrarian reforms with a strong political understanding of rural economy. On the other hand the target of beneficiaries consisted of rural poor and mobilising through political ideology of left and democratic parties of LF with a clear consciousness of the limited power of the state government given by the existing federal system, the initiatives of the state government becomes more crucial and challenging.

The general feature of the strategy used by the L.F. Govt. of 1977 can be classified into three possible categories :

1. The Strong political will of the constituent parties of LF to help the rural poor in their economic development reflected from the legislation introduced for agrarian reforms and their policies implication . The general contradiction between the stated objectives and existing organisational framework have been met through the utilization of political will. The so called separation of developmental forces and political processes of the state came to met in the same line in response to this attempt. The mobilization of the working class and peasantry

intended through active inspiration of cadre based left and democratic political parties of the LF.

2. The Central planning procedures adopted by the Congress government for rural development activities have been identified as the fiat from the top (frankel : 1978), where local level organizations had nothing to say about planning and implementation. The planning procedure of LF is marked as planning from the below. This process, on the other hand, can be identified as "bottom up process". In this procedure beneficiaries at the local level are taking initiative of various programmes. The grassroot based peasant's organization, panchayats and local units of the political parties are identified as the viable units for local level planning. The grassroot based organisations are participated by 'dedicated' party workers, rural poor, particularly landless agricultural labourers and sharecroppers. The election to the panchayat bodies in 1978 have strengthened this process. In this style of working the beneficiaries of various rural development programmes, including agrarian reforms, are going to form a homogenous group.

3. The adequate organisational facilities for various programmes have identified as an important task. The leadership of the LF political parties have identified that existing government administration is not sufficient to implement the programmes of rural development properly. The democratic decentralization of political power through local self government is considered as a viable alternative. The local leadership of the rural poor

will develop within these organizations with a consciousness of economic and social formation of rural society. This consciousness will grow among the exploited masses and help them to organize at local level. The panchayat is the most easily acceptable body to carry on this believes of left parties and in consequence alternative organisations are coming up to take care of activities.* These organisations, although forming in a parallel manner coming close to existing structure to fill up the gaps between beneficiaries and government officials.

Agrarian Reforms

'Marxist political parties' have emphasised the importance of agrarian reforms as the centre of all the activities for rural development. It is due to their ideological orientation towards a socialistic society and partly due to their motive regarding the social reality. They are analysing the existing social structure in terms of economic variables and relation of production. The super structure of society which is dependent upon mode of production and relation of production become the important point of analysis. These political parties are giving more attention to the aspects related to 'radical' change in the asset structure of mode of production in agriculture for changing the socio-economic condition of the rural poor. Existing structure and which marked as situation of exploitation/wanted to change through 'radical agrarian reforms' with mobilization of rural poor. In this circumstances the social transformation is conditioned by consciousness of the masses. When this stage will achieve

* It was stated that Panchayat will act as means for liberating the rural poor through mobilizing and organizing at the local level.

then the exploited masses will be able to identify their enemies and their allies and this will led them to mobilize as a exploited homogenous group.

Mobilization of rural masses intended for the various activities introduced by LF government, although it covers a wide range of activities of agrarian reforms and land reforms have been given special priority. Parties of LF have identified that the poorest segments of rural population have neither their resources to develop their socio-economic condition nor they are protected from the clutches of usures, farm businessmen and landlords. The landless agricultural laboures and tenants, the major section of peasantry is neglected and not considered by previous state government to mobilise for agrarian reforms. In the election manifesto of the LF it has been clearly identified that social and people's democratic revolution in the state is possible only through radical attempt and it needs a strong political will of the ruling political parties. The land to the tiller and identification of ceiling excess land will strengthen the agrarian reform movements. Complete elimination of all the feudal and big land lord's interest in rural society should be done through agrarian reforms. Change to the pattern of land holding, that captured by rich peasant and absentee landlords and safeguarding the rights of sharecroppers, legislation in the form of agrarian reforms intended. Yet, the scope of legislation in this sphere by a state government is very limited and West Bengal government is very much consciousness about it.

The West Bengal Land Reforms (Amendment) of 1977 was introduced by the LF government, main attention was given to plug some serious loopholes in land reforms laws passed by previous congress government. Important points of the Bill are follows :

1. Definition of the Bargadar

Bargadars have defined as a man who is cultivating the land in favour of the owner through a contract of share distribution in the form of Barsa Adhiar, Bhag and also a man who is working under Kishani system with a contract of getting share will be identified as Bargadar. This definition of Bargadar has wider implication over identification and helps to identify the original sharecropper of a particular plot of land.

2. The meaning of the term personal cultivation have been radically changed through an amendment : According to the new amendment, a plot of land without any bargadar will not be identified as land under personal cultivation until and unless the owner is engaged in cultivation or by his family members. In this case family members will have to stay in the nearby place for the major part of the year and land is the principle source of income. It has deleted the provision of cultivation through servants and wage labours as personal cultivation. The amendment specifically mentioned that family members should live within a area of eight kilometers, either from the land or from the particular Mouza.

3. Certain safeguards for holdings cultivated by the Bargars

A person lawfully cultivating any land which is owned by the others shall be recognised as bargadar and the burden of proving his claim as bargadar has given to the landowners. Even after the death of a bargadar his son or nearest relative will become the tenant for that particular plot of land.

4. Share of production

Share of produce payable by a Bargedar to land owners are required to give receipt for the share they received from their respective Bargadars. If any land owner failed to give receipt then it became punishable. The provision of the share will be 50 : 50 when inputs are supplied by land owner and 75 : 25 in the remaining cases.

Some other programmes have also introduced in the form of agrarian reforms : (a) Quick recording the names of the Bargadars through operation Barga and thereby securing them the legal rights which approved in the land reforms Bill of 1977.

(b) Distribution of already available ceiling surplus government vested lands among the landless and land poor with active co-operation of panchayats, peasant organization and village level committees.

(c) Programme to identify land held in benami, in excess of ceiling laws, with a new mechanism of people's participation inspired jointly by political parties and government administration. In this mechanism, evidence of village people is the driving force to identify the benami land.

(d) A complete change in the existing revenue system. A limitation of five acres of land have been exempted from paying any revenue/land holding beyond the limit have to pay revenue at a progressive rate to give relief the small and marginal farmers.

(e) Financial assistance to the registered sharecroppers and owners of government vested land in the form of subsidies and institutional credit to save them from the exploitation of money lenders and landlords.

In West Bengal, the rural society is dominated by big land holders as this category holding about 40 per cent of the total agricultural land whereas percentage of household is only 4 per cent. On the other hand the marginal farmers consisting of 66.38%, are holding only 27.15% of the total land in the state. Due to this reason a large number of rural people are living with insufficient land. As a result of rural underdevelopment and alienation from land, in 1980, the total number of agricultural labourer increased to 42 per cent that indicates 1.3 per cent increase per annum. In this agrarian background the analysis of land reform measures become relevant for rural development in West Bengal.

Identification of Surplus Land

The identification of surplus land and distribution among the land poor marked as a crucial task in agrarian reform. The method that already introduced in completely different from any other state governments in India. The traditional dependency

over the established government administration changed to people's participation in an organised manner. D. Bandayopadhyay, the land reforms commissioner, had identified the process as a simple mechanism where evidence of sharecroppers and agricultural labourers are considered with great importance. The method identified that excess land identification became possible with statutory method and by mobilizing the people to give evidence those are working in the land of the same area. In fact, this method is not a simple one as it needs a strong pressure of outside forces to mobilize the people to appear before the government officials and give correct evidence. The general tendency of the rural poor is not to go in any controversy or to go against the interest of landed community. Several social relationships and influences are also directly connected with this happenings and economically the poor are still dependent upon the mercy of rich peasants during the lean period.

To meet this problem properly, peasant organizations and local bodies of ruling political parties are using as a reinforcement mechanism which is the unique feature of this programme. The organizations of rural poor at the grassroot level in the form of village level committees kishan sabhas and other local bodies are playing a vital role to mobilize the rural poor for identifying the excess land. The role of the government officials, to some extent, remain same, although they have been directed to change their attitude in favour of rural poor. This change is only expected when other organization and government officials are coming closer for the sake of successful

implementation of various programmes. Now the officials are coming into the field for identifying the excess land, Barga registration and others. In this manner the general procedure of working within the office campus is also changing and direct relationships with beneficiaries become possible. The role of the police force is also important and they have been ordered to work in favour of rural poor, which was totally absent in Congress period.

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Upto 31st December 1981 the total agricultural vested land are 12.49 lakh acres and 7.16 lakh areas of land have been distributed among the 13.24 lakh beneficiaries about 7.49 lakh are whome from scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. From 1st January to 31st December 1981 the rate of vested land distribution has been raised by 37,561 acres among 1,29,886 beneficiaries. The identification of vested land and its distribution is prevented by big land owners community and they are working to influence the administration, beneficiaries and government against several reforms. On the other hand 1.79 lakh areas of land is pending as injunction order has been given by high court. The trend of creating disturbance through putting injunction is increasing day by day. The trend is very clear, on 31st December 1978 area under legal dispute was 1.64 lakh acres, after one year it rose to 1.68 lakh acres, and now it is 1.79 lakh acres.

Reorientation camps were arranged, to review the reactions of the rural poor on general land reform schemes. In 1978 several camps were organized with 40 participants those are agricultural labourers, sharecropper and marginal farmers, the

importance of these camps: (a) to inspire the rural poor to organise against the oppression, illiteracy and poverty which have folded the rural society in every spheres of life.

(b) The camps will help them to develop the community sentiment for working jointly and for overall development of their socio-economic condition.

(c) Camps are used as a means to express their bitter experiences in daily life and communicate it to the broader areas and identify the common loopholes in various schemes working in the rural areas.

In the latest reorientation camp at Sagardighi, in Murshidabad district, 32 villagers were selected to attend the camp, but one of them, because illness failed to attend. 12 officials of revenue Department also participate to explain the schemes and recording the views of various participants. The participants were selected through local panchayat samities at block level. The background of all the participants are, 12 Bargadars, (four persons have no land of their own), Five owners of government vested land (three were landless), 11 land less agricultural labourers and four marginal farmers. This sampling of participant proves the intention of the state government that beneficiaries of the agrarian reforms should be the rural poor. Other important aspect is planning according to the reactions and suggestions of the beneficiaries become viable through arranging these camps. The traditional gap between government and rural poor also bridged and informal relationships between these two groups developed.

Discussion of important issues and identification of probable solution was the main agenda of the camp. Important questions regarding implementation of reform measures, policy regarding agricultural wages, problem of organizing rural labour force into a single organization were raised. These issues were raised in relation to the existing socio-economic condition of India in general and West Bengal in particular. The problems identified in this camp are : Insufficient irrigation facilities, shortage of capital inputs for agriculture, insecurity of the sharecroppers and oppression of land holders, development of communication system, absence of non-agricultural source of income, etc. A long list of suggestion was recorded in the camp. Total agriculture reforms through land reform, lowering the land ceiling limit, distribution of land among the real landless, increasing the consciousness regarding economic exploitation, class based organization of the poor, cooperation between government official and general people, sufficient facilities for small and cottage industries, etc. were the principle suggestion. All the participant recognised that mere change in government will not solve the various problems and change in the existing structure is not possible unless and until the basic change in the total socio-economic structure is intended and programmes are introduced in that direction.

The first Reorientation camp arranged at Halusai in Hooghly district in May 1978 is important in this sphere. A proposal was suggested by the non-official participants that "for barga

registration, if government is thinking very seriously, special camps should be arranged within the villages for recording the names of sharecroppers". If the camps are arranged within the villages the poor sharecroppers will come forward to register their rights. It was then pointed out that in general procedure of recording the sharecropping right the poor people are afraid of their rich land lords and socio-economic pressure against registration.³ In response to this recommendation government of West Bengal organized camp in the village patna Bhairabpur of Hooghly district in June 8 and 9, 1978. A team of officials came to the village and group meetings, advertisements, personal contacts were made and discussion took place before the recording works started. During the two days of the camp around 200 bargadars came for recording their right and most of them belonged to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. Their names were enlisted in the field and the lists were hanged up in the public places to record the objections of the land owners and finally, after verification, 191 Bargadars were registered in that particular mouza. This process of recording proves that sufficient arrangement for recording the names of the sharecroppers with the popular participation is necessary and this is also an emperically tested method.

³ In my recent tour to Kandi Block, district Murshidabad, several people expressed their unwillingness to register their Barga right due to expected oppression from the owner's end. The oppression is not only limited in economic spheres but also in social life.

The general reaction of the first camp was very much remarkable among the officials and rural poor. This new method of registration was then formalised for the whole state after a workshop on land reform measures was held in Calcutta in 1978. This new form of tenant registrations now known as operation Barga. The important features of this programme is the identification of priority areas and organize the camps of three four days duration for registration of sharecroppers. In these camps government officials at block levels, sub divisional Land Revenue Officer or a special revenue officer participate on behalf of government, and non-official participation taking place through peasant organization and panchayats. In this process beneficiaries are enable to organize and participate in the activities related to agrarian reforms.

The Operation Barga

The West Bengal governments' operation Barga(OB), or programmes for rapid recording of the Bargadar's right to cultivate the land, completed its fifth year in August 1983. This is a crash programme for recording the names of the Bargadars to get his name recorded within a specified time. (S. Chattpadhyaya : 1979).

The OB has some special features :

- (a) Process of recording become easier through people's participation, within a specified time a large number of Bargadars are able to register their right under this crash programme.

(b) Once the name of a sharecropper is registered as the legal cultivator then land owner has no right to evict the recorded sharecropper from the land.

(c) The recorded right of the Bargadars provides some financial facilities from institutional resources. The financial assistance giving them some kind of economic benefits and help them to come out from the grip of land-owners and money lenders. A scheme of 'Zero interest' has been introduced for the registered sharecroppers and government is bearing the burden of interest for them.

The performance of OB during the last four years have proved the efficacy of the methods used for recording the names of the Bargadars. Upto the period August 1979, 740808 bargadars were recorded in all the 15 districts of rural West Bengal. This figure, upto 31st December 1981, was 1125826 that indicate a sharp increase of the number of recorded Bargadars. But according to the officials of land and land revenue department about 50 per cent of the existing sharecroppers remained outside of this scheme and traditional mode of sharecropping is dominant among unrecorded tenants. The rapid implementation of OB have strengthen the forces in rural areas to organize the rural poor in a homogenous group, i.e. registered tenants. On the other hand, this movement has been broken the moral of the rural gentry. Due to this reason in some places officials of the land and land revenue department have been manhandled by big land-owners. In 1978, when the officials of land and land revenue

department came to register the names of the Bargadars one Bargadar was cutted into pieces in the field in Murshidabad district (B.Dasgupta : 1979:11). There are several incidents in all the districts⁴ which proved that OB have strengthen the class struggle in rural areas and leads to a strong organisation of rural poor.

To promote the economic condition of the sharecroppers and owners of the government vested land special scheme have been introduced. Lack of finance for cultivation of vested land and recorded land is the major problem for the rural poor. In the absence of institutional credit and financing agents land poor rural people taking loan from local money lenders and land owners at the rate of 36-120 per cent of interest. The Nationalisation of Bank failed to help the people like small farmers, Bargadars and landless agricultural labourer. But the big land holding class, by showing their land, entitled to get loan at 8.10 per cent of interest. In this condition poor farmers become the target of exploitation of money lenders.

In 1979 a pilot project was undertaken with active participation of five public sector banks to findout any reasonable solution to finance the poor peasants. After the sucessful pilot project the programme is extended to eleven banks and one cooperative bank. Now they are involved in the programme to give loans to the sharecroppers and the owner of government vested land. According to this new scheme the poor people are getting loans on the basis of their Bargadars certificate and ownership document of the vested lands. In most of the cases no

⁴ The fact that 80 Bargadars were murdered during the period of 1979-80 as they had tried to defy the authority of the land-owners (R.Khasnabis:1981:47).

interest is payable if payment is made timely and the burden of interest is paid by state government. Previously these peoples were not entitled to get credit from the nationalised banks as bank authorities were not interested to give loan due to their poor economic background and they had no legal rights over the land. The alternative credit support system was introduced in a limited area to prove its feasibility and later extended all over the rural West Bengal. Now, the loans are distributed among the rural poor during the period of cultivation, some times, loans are giving in the form of goods like seeds, fertilizer and pesticides, it also prevented the misuse of money.

To avoid any expected complication in transferring the land owned by small holders and Barga recorded land it has proposed to set up area wise land development corporation. It was realised that due to various land reform measures the complication regarding transfer of land are increasing. According to the new proposal in the irrigated area upto one hectare and 1½ hectares non-irrigated area, the holders of land and without any alternative source of income will get this facility. The land corporations are also giving loan to the registered Bargadars through mortgaging the land and the amount of loan is fixed in response to the market price of the particular plot of land. The proposal is very much helpful when Bargadars are interested to purchase the land that he is cultivating as registered share-cropper. The owner of Barga recorded land are also getting the benefits from this programme by getting the market price of his land.

According to the second land reforms amendment of 1981 the recorded Bargadars and owners of government vested land are entitled to form cooperative common service society for their economic development. In the areas where seven or more persons holding the land of one acre, either Bargadars or owners of vested land or marginal farmers may form such type of society. The cooperative society should be used for increasing the production through supplying the bullock, seeds, fertilizer, irrigation facilities and required cash loan. The marketing of agricultural production also identified as the responsibility of the cooperative society as marketing of goods is an important problem for small land holders. It is expected that formation of such cooperative society will help the rural poor to improve their economic condition and it will also inspired them to organize at local level.

Home Stead Land

A large number of agricultural labourers and sharecroppers are living in the land of employer farmers and land owners respectively. This situation is directly effecting the activities like Barga registration and identification of excess land. The sharecroppers and labourers are always afraid of displacement from their living places if they are going to give evidence against the owner or recording the rights of sharecropping. To help these people as from eviction from their homestead land the state government has been introduced one scheme to give legal rights for homestead land. 118481 number of beneficiaries received the homestead land, upto 31st December 1981,

through West Bengal Acquisition of Homestead Land for Agricultural Laboures, Artisans and Fishermen Act, 1975. Out of the total number of beneficiaries 49603 are belong to scheduled caste and 22103 of scheduled tribes. This information proves that the benefits of the programme directly going to the weaker/poorer segments of the society. State government is also helping these beneficiaries to construct new houses or to repair the existing ones. In some areas the 'Food For Work Programme' have also used for this programme.

Minimum Wage Programme

There are greater variation throughout West Bengal regarding the mode of payment of the agricultural labourers, even within the district variations are easily identifiable. Generally, the payment varied between 4-7 rupees and in some areas the labourer are giving some rice, bidi and tiffin during the lunch time. The amount of wage raised according to the season and during the peak period the wage rate going up and ..

come down during the lean period. For this reason the minimum wage Act 1948 and all other legal sanction regarding this has been introduced for industrial workers as well as agricultural labourers. But an injunction has been issued by the Calcutta High Court against the implementation of minimum wage notification. In this circumstances state government failed to settle the matter. One meeting was organized by W.B. Government where farmers and agricultural labourers organizations were invited by labour minister, K.P. Ghosh. In the meeting it was decided that they will fought jointly to introduced Rs.8.10

and eight hours working and after some time this rate increased to Rs.9.10.

Old age pension

Agricultural labourers are not getting any financial assistance from the employers during their old age as there are no provision of getting any retirement benefits. In all the cases these poor peoples passed the last phase of their life upon the mercy of others. From 1980, a programme of old age pension for the farmers and agricultural labourers has been introduced to give some financial assistance. To get this pension the beneficiaries should be atleast of 60 years, and living in the West Bengal for the last ten years. Only 65 rupees are paid in the form of pension and Gram panchayats are fully responsible for implementing the scheme.

Revenue :

The old revenue system has been changed in favour of small, marginal and middle farmers. The revenue system was adopted from Zamindari tradition of revenue which was always burdensome for small and marginal land holders. To give some economic relief in land revenue, small and marginal land holders are exempted from all sorts of revenue burden and a progressive rate of revenue system imposed over big landlords. In the present situation big and middle land holders are paying the revenue at a progressive rate.

Panchayati Raj

A new panchayat system has been introduced in 1978 where representatives were elected in party line with party symbol.

This panchyat election in West Bengal is different from other states because of its particular process of election and character and ideological orientation of the elected members towards rural development. The main guiding principle behind this new system is the decentralization of power, introduction of party machinery within the panchayat organization and breaking up the traditional power structure within the rural community. Before finalising the election procedure several initiatives were taken at the state and district levels in the forms of meeting discussion and review of various reports on panchyat raj.

The existing panchyat system is divided into three tier organizations at district block and village levels. The gram panchayats (GP) are consist of elected members and headed by Pradhans and Uppa-pradhans. The general staff of GP consist of peoples like GP secretaries, Job assistants, gram sevak, chowkidars dafadars and tax collectors. The Pradhans are most crucial figure among all the personnel attached to G.P. To strengthen the activities of the GP some village level committees consisted of local non-officials like farmers, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers are also working.

The panchyat samity (Block Panchyat) is consist of GPs and, generally, working within the jurisdiction of block administration. The panchyat samities (PS) are consist of members elected directly by village peoples. The PSs are headed by Sabhapati and Sahakari Sabhapati, these are elected among the members. In the

activities of PS people like Pradhans of adjoining GPs and local MLAs are also participating and BDOs are working as the ex-officio secretary. The executive officials of the block administration and supporting staff of the CD came under the procedure of PS. The implementation of the development activities and planning for the whole block is the main task of these PS. that includes economic activities, rural health, development of agriculture, village industries, fisheries, etc. At present, all the PS are working through eight samities to supervise various schemes. The block level advisory committee is another organization attached to PS. The administrative structure of the block administration, generally remains the same, although the relationship changed rapidly. At present the sabhapati of the PS is very powerful person and it influence the functioning of BDOs, the VLWs are now working according to the directions given by the Pradhans of GP and some other changes taken place within the block structure.

The Zilla parishads are the highest bodies and headed by Chairman known as Sabhadhipati, elected among the member of Zilla Parishad (ZP). In the proceeding of the ZPs the elected as well as some nominated members are participating. The administration of ZP is working through eight samities to supervise the various activities at district level. The main tasks of these committees are to maintain effective coordination within the district administration and monitoring the activities of the PR.

The objectives behind the new panchayat system can be classified into three categories, i.e. democratic decentralisation of power, strengthening the development of rural areas and mobilizing and organising the rural poor. The election to the panchayats has filled up the gap between government administration and rural people through ensuring the people's participation. The problem of weak organization at the grassroot levels to carry on the programmes for economic development and mobilization of human and material resources has been solved through present structure of panchayat bodies. The emergence of new leadership at the local level emerged within the social structure through the leadership in panchayat bodies. The bottom up process of planning, introduced by LF in place of top down process, is implemented through GP, PS, and ZP. The important objective of the new panchayat organization is joining the economic and political process at the grassroot level. As the political parties are dominating the power of panchayat bodies both the organizations came very close in implementing the rural development programmes. But it is also creating problem at the local level as political parties are using the power for the benefit of their party workers and supporters.

Land reforms, the most important issue of rural development, entirely dependent upon the initiatives of the panchayat members. The programme like OB generally implementing through existing administrative staff but the mobilization of rural poor in favour of recording their rights depends upon the initiative of local panchayat members and party workers. The responsibility of

popularising the programmes and made the rural poor consciousness regarding the benefits of recording Barga rights or identifying the excess land has been given to panchayats. This process is the result of ideological beliefs and concerted initiatives taken by left political parties of LF. Mobilization of the rural poor as a class and strengthening the class struggle at the grassroot level is the ultimate target of this strategy. The activities of the panchayat organizations are making the poor conscious of their exploitation. The consciousness regarding exploitation will help them to identify the real exploiters of the society, i.e. the rich peasants and a considerable part of middle peasants. The vicious circle of interest groups holds the control over the rural power structure and panchayat is one of them. Capturing the political power at the local level has been taken place through utilizing the democratic procedure of voting to the panchayat bodies. In this case the leftist parties are using the existing organizations and style of working to break the traditional power structure.⁵ The responsibility of these tasks has been given to the rural poor, the members of various panchayat bodies. In case of GP membership 50.7 per cent are owner cultivator of which 42.9 per

⁵ But in some place like Malda and Murshidabad district the Congress men are in panchayat and maintaining the dominance of traditional supremacy as left parties are not in dominant position.

cent holds land below two acres and only 7.3 per cent members holding land over 10 acres. On the other hand 6.6 per cent Bargadars and land less agricultural labourers representing in all the GPs.

Table 1

Distribution of Gram Panchayat Members according to their Profession

<u>Serial No.</u>	<u>Profession</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1.	Owner cultivators	50.7
2.	Teacher	14.0
3.	Unemployed	7.5
4.	Land-less Agricultural Labourers	4.8
5.	Bargadars	1.8
6.	Technician	1.6
7.	Shopkeeper	1.4
8.	Skilled Labour	1.3
9.	Doctor	1.1
10.	Tailor	0.6
11.	Student	0.6
12.	Fishermen	0.4
13.	Others	14.0

Source : Planning and Development Department, Government of West Bengal.

Table 2

Land Holding Patterns of the Gram Panchayat Members

<u>Land Holding</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Below 2 acres	42.9
2 - 5 "	24.2
5 - 10 "	13.0
8 - 10 "	8.1
Above 10 "	7.8

Source : IBID.

Comprehensive development

Comprehensive Area Development Corporation (CADC), although established in 1974, is another important scheme of the LF. government. The WBCADC was formed to implement some comprehensive rural development schemes through different projects. The stated logic behind the comprehensive schemes was to accelerate the process of socio-economic development of particular region and then spread the network of activities throughout the state. When the LF. government came into power in 1977 it was decided to give a fresh chance to CADC to prove its worth. The existing administration was redesigned with redefined objectives and its role in rural development. The new approaches introduced by CADC are.

1. Integrated approach of development through diversification of activities. The various activities of the corporation arranged in a proper order to findout the gaps within various

programmes and implemented in a integrated manner. The requirements related to input, credit and extension of activities were undertaken at the project level and

in a well integrated forms. Marketing of production of goods and services were also undertaken in this method.

2. Emphasise over non-agricultural activities as agricultural resources are limited by land and productivity. The development of small and cottage industries, animal husbandry and fisheries has been introduced to give alternative source of income and generation of additional employment. For the successful implementation of this scheme C/DC is working with the support of KVIC and UNICEF. The production of woollen goods at kalimpong, spices at kaliagang, hand made paper and pig breeding at naxalbari and several others undertaken in this scheme.

3. People's participation : The strategy of people's participation in all the programmes, even in decision making, has been identified as necessary method of comprehensive rural development. The planning procedure at the project level changed to bottom up process. The mobilization of rural poor in favour of comprehensive development become possible through people's participation. The general frames of the programme are settled at Calcutta, the head-quarter, where peoples from project administration, Govt. officials and professionals are cumming together. The details of the programme is settle down at project levels and special attention is given to local resources. The local leadership, leadership of political parties, panchyat

members and rural poor are coming closer for project level activities. The project level advisory committees are also playing a vital role to strengthen people's participation.

The documents published by the West Bengal CADC frequently mentioned that land reform is an essential task for rural development when rural society is depending upon the pattern of land holdings and land relations.⁶ The concept of land holding is directly related to socio-economic condition of the rural society, then change and development in the existing socio-economic condition is possible only through changing the pattern of land holding and relations of production in rural society. In reaction to this formulation the scheme of land reforms also introduced in CADC projects. The project administrative officials are working jointly with land reforms officials to identify and record the names of Bargadars. But a little emphasize has given to agrarian reforms in CADC list.

Relation with other organization

At the initial stage, West Bengal CADC failed to maintain any close relationships with other organizations like panchayats and Krishak Sabhas. Practically, Krishak Sabha challenged the activities of CADC and identify it as an attempt to blow up

⁶ Most of the CADC publication including of Dr. Biplab Dasgupta, the Executive Vice-Chairman, mentioned it repeatedly. Although, little attempt has been taken so far.

organization of peasantry and serve the purpose of landed class (West Bengal provincial Krishak Sabha : 1979: 5). But from 1978 onward a close and peaceful relationships emerged between two organizations through the initiative of political parties of LF Panchyat members are now participating in planning and implementation it happened by working together.

The target of all the activities is identification with the rural poor. The direct physical association with the poor marked as the necessary condition for implementation of various programmes are formulated for rural poor consist of the people like landless agricultural labourers, sharecroppers, marginal farmers and small farmers. The programme like Dharmagola is directly related to the rural poor as it has only introduced for those people. The service centre scheme consumer stores, non-agricultural programmes are all working in favour of rural poor.

Conclusion

The activities of the LF Govt. in West Bengal for the last six years became a relevant issue among the social scientist throughout India. The character of all the programmes introduced for rural development became the centre of debate. The debate started with the view whether these programmes are taken with the line of the marxist ideology and strengthening the rural contradiction as well as the class struggle. Then the ideological and political dimensions of all these programmes needs clear analysis. The most controversial issue of all the programmes introduced are agrarian reforms in general and operation Barga

in particular. The other important issue is the strategy introduced for rural development in comparison to other state governments. Agrarian Programmes other than the OB are not new as most of these programmes were introduced in pre-1977 period. But the implementation part of these programmes should be considered with equal importance. Some changes were also taken place in the old programmes in the form of amendments.

At the implementation stage, LF government is using party organization at the local level. But procedure had been challenged in the court of law. In the case of Biswanath Ghosh vs. the state of West Bengal, Calcutta High Court identified the process of Barga recording through utilizing party and local level organizations as legally unsound. In case of Barga recording the government officials should not take the advice of local political parties, peasants and agricultural labourers organizations. It indicates that the rural landed gentry is very much afraid of this procedure as it proved to be one efficient step to record the sharecropping right. The strong political will which is the guiding force of this strategy filling up the gaps in the implementation of various agrarian reforms. But the procedure is not free of constraints as local party organization may be used for resisting the Barga right if it is related to LF party supporter. In this case the party organization and the character of party workers become relevant. If the LF parties are really represented by the poor people like sharecropper, agricultural labourers and other

rural poor than it will be helpful for the target group. The major allegation put forward by a group of social scientist, that the LF government is not very much inclined to go against the interest of the Jotedars and rich farmers. To them all the programmes introduced for rural development are basically moderate and framing not with the lines of radical principle. Most of these programmes are adopting in a short-term manner., as these programmes are not useful for long time, the left and democratic parties of LF are compromising with the existing socio-economic and political system ruled by constitutional laws. ^{within} Yet l the limited scope of political and financial power allotted to the state government, the performance of the left front government is quite satisfactory. It is proved from the number of sharecroppers recorded, housesites given to rural poor, vested land receiver, generation of additional employment, and other activities has given a new procedure of working in favour of rural poor.

Appendix

Table-3

Percentage, Number and Area of Operational Holdings 1976-77 in West Bengal

Category	Size Class (Hect.)	Percentage, Number of Holdings	Percentage of Area
1	Below 0.5	43.54	10.27
2	0.5 - 1.0	22.94	16.88
3 Marginal	Below 1.0	66.48	27.15
4 Small	1.0 - 2.0	20.55	28.54
5	2.0 - 3.0	8.05	19.13
6	3.0 - 4.0	2.33	7.96
7 Semi Medium	2.0 - 4.0	10.38	27.09
8	4.0 - 5.0	1.54	6.72
9	5.0 - 7.5	0.85	5.12
10	7.5 - 10.0	0.16	1.41
11 Medium	4.0 - 10.0	2.55	13.25
12	10.0 - 12.0	0.03	0.35
13	20.0 - 30.0	N	0.04
14	30.0 - 40.0	N	0.02
15	40.0 - 50.0	N	N
16	50.0 and above	0.01	3.56
17	10.0 and above	0.04	3.97
		100.00	100.00

Source : Agricultural Census 1976-77, Govt. of West Bengal, 1979.

Table -4

District-Wise Progress of Agricultural Land
Distribution in West Bengal upto
31st December 1981

(in acres)

District	Total Vested Land	Vested Land hit by Injunction	Land Distri- buted	Land av- ailable for dis- tribu- tion
Darjeeling	69751.34	2722.33	20693.03	25441.00
Jalpaiguri	218184.55	4544.82	90318.36	21906.51
Cooch Behar	77934.09	2363.97	48009.28	8435.85
West Dinajpur	194960.91	12526.23	89321.19	47398.79
Malda	115130.35	8091.60	52590.10	21372.19
Purulia	282448.08	12433.55	38198.79	38902.54
Hooghly	26420.89	4809.62	8815.02	4210.67
Midnapore	776335.66	36645.02	175858.44	79409.32
Bankura	423449.24	7390.33	38417.26	13203.19
Birbhum	103846.71	9936.54	21791.99	13012.24
Burdwan	171745.22	22533.02	36852.65	19116.25
Murshidabad	100081.65	10126.18	24505.47	20976.06
Nadia	48559.04	6198.28	12355.67	5560.70
Howrah	12191.38	2257.86	2468.55	1617.14
24 Parganas	226332.75	36885.10	5672.42	32234.64
Total	2847371.86	179464.45	716916.22	352797.09

Table -5

Implementation of Operation Barga upto 31st December 1981

District	Number of Barga dars Recorded		
	Upto August 1979	Upto 31st December 1980	Upto 31st December 1981
Darjeeling	8689	9880	10337
Jalpaiguri	38738	45405	45478
Cooch Behar	44650	54797	58624
West Dinajpur	68954	84955	90116
Malda	51668	60325	68499
Hooghly	49939	66329	73748
Midnapur	135776	213698	257984
Bankura	56923	77599	83202
Birbhum	44609	60449	72783
Burdwan	56977	79825	87225
Murshidabad	38251	48248*	56332
Nadia	28214	38691	43724
Howrah	24890	30743	32990
24 Parganas	92530	131042	144784
 Total	740808	1001986	1125826

*In Murshidabad due to a compilation error there was excess reporting in Statistical Report No-3, this mistake has been rectified.

Source: Land Reforms in West Bengal; Statistical Report No-2, 5 and 7. Government of West Bengal.

Table -6

Number of Beneficiaries Received Homestead Land
Through west Bengal Acquisition Homestead
Land For Agricultural Labourers Art-
isans and Fishermen Act, 1975

Districts	Number of Beneficiaries		
	Upto 31st December 1981	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribe
Darjeeling	1501	622	346
Jalpaiguri	4483	1561	777
Cooch Behar	4487	2703	41
West Dinajpur	7148	3255	1595
Malda	11843	2502	1924
Hooghly	12789	6048	3485
Midnapore	11366	2734	1932
Bankura	10437	6775	1219
Birbhum	6310	3085	1234
Burdwan	31818	15735	8244
Murshidabad	5341	1446	567
Nadia	5841	1448	357
Howrah	919	260	48
24 Parganas	4198	1429	334
Total	118481	49603	22103

Table -7

Average Wage Rate of Agricultural Labourer,
1976-77 to 1980-81

(in Rs.)

District	Average Rate 1976-77	1980-81
Darjeeling	5.90	7.62
Jalpaiguri	5.20	7.01
Cooch Behar	6.05	6.28
West Dinajpur	4.70	5.05
Malda	4.50	4.80
Purulia	7.00	5.25
Hooghly	5.60	7.96
Midnapore	5.40	7.59
Bankura	7.10	7.28
Birbhum	5.55	6.96
Burdwan	5.70	7.66
Murshidabad	5.80	7.75
Nadia	4.80	5.84
Howrah	6.50	7.92
24 Parganas	5.75	7.63
All West Bengal	5.65	6.80

Source : Socio-Economic Evaluation Section,
 Department of Agriculture, Government
 of West Bengal.

Table -8

Number of Beneficiaries Who Received Agricul-
tural Vested Land upto December
1981

District	Total Number	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribe
Darjeeling	24235	8360	6556
Jalpaiguri	74738	36858	18442
Cooch Behar	80135	56380	753
West Dinajpur	140384	49419	38933
Malda	91813	26066	17604
Purulia	42052	12776	13509
Hooghly	33447	14415	5549
Midnapur	380236	109692	85881
Bankura	65937	35681	13319
Birbhum	47577	24508	10119
Burdwan	93920	42135	18187
Murshidabad	70683	14459	3950
Nadia	42080	13522	3378
Howrah	13299	2852	81
24 Parganas	123526	48124	17707
Total	1324062	495247	253968

Source : Land Reforms in West Bengal : Statistical Report-I to VII.

Table -9

District-Wise Allotments Under Different Projects During 1978-79 to 1980-1981

District	No. of Panchayat Samities	No. of Gram Panchayats	Total Sanctioned* amount in last three years(Rs.in lakh)	Per-capita amount sanctioned in last three years(Rs.)
Darjeeling	10	76	327.21	41.85
Jalpaiguri	12	122	302.02	17.26
Cooch Behar	13	128	287.62	20.34
West Dinajpur	16	157	334.64	17.99
Malda	15	144	645.00	28.83
Purulia	20	169	739.54	46.14
Hooghly	17	201	999.31	34.79
Midnapur	52	515	1976.58	35.88
Bankura	22	190	911.40	44.87
Birbhum	19	169	774.97	43.64
Burdwan	27	224	1066.15	27.10
Murshidabad	26	251	905.04	30.78
Nadia	16	182	371.16	32.78
Howrah	14	165	942.39	38.98
24 Parganas	50	549	1473.01	17.43
Total	324	3242	12248.04	

*Figures exclude the allotment on the following accounts : (a) Less grant etc. (b) IRDP (c) Food grains.

Source : Panchayat in West Bengal (From 1978-79 to 1980-81) : A Refiew, Govt. of West Bengal, 1982, P-73.

Table -10

Progress of Lending by the Banks to Share-croppers and Assignes of Vested Lands

District	1979	1980	1981
Darjeeling	611	2241	208
Jalpaiguri	660	1572	6941
Cooch Behar	7014	8715	2351
West Dinajpur	5061	3625	9712
Malda	4884	2879	6833
Hooghly	1390	2852	3608
Midnapur	2083	3853	69750
Bankura	3484	4707	2709
Birbhum	5783	23259	17782
Burdwan	7267	2723	5755
Murshidabad	9293	9523	3171
Nadia	6834	1601	96
Howrah	253	371	754
24 Parganas	2500	2051	896
Purulia	1997	1064	89
Total	59114	71054	130655

Source : Land Reforms in West Bengal,
 Statistical Report-VI, Government of
 West Bengal, p-14.

Table-11

Sale-Deeds Registered During 1975-76
to 79-80

District	Number of Saledeeds				
	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80
24 Parganas	269642	246508	276358	272932	263025
Nadia	57144	52634	67780	68986	68255
Murshidabad	150617	98702	99815	100300	95007
Burdwan	101624	103030	93292	87712	84084
Birbhum	71072	79654	65429	63720	63398
Bankura	63336	55354	51092	47895	47199
Midnapur	221066	199755	177863	150026	145833
Hooghly	83763	77871	71486	69181	63802
Purulia	59477	49189	48214	40172	42461
Malda	68278	41087	59468	61244	64524
West Dinajpur	120131	101020	81540	83240	80392
Cooch Behar	92906	82730	78181	52165	52721
Jalpaiguri	51831	42430	44069	38409	41431
Darjeeling	10729	8808	10221	10322	10322
Howrah	34452	44117	37704	29985	34000
Total	1457167	1282889	1262512	1177289	1156454

Source : Office of the Inspector General of Registration, W.Bengal.

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